

Lynese Cargill

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The Honorable Audrey G. Fleissig
United States District Court Judge – Eastern District of Missouri
Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Court House
111 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63102

Re: *United States of America vs. Lynese Cargill*
0865 4:20 CR00607-1 AGF

Dear Judge Fleissig:

My name is Lynese Cargill and I write this letter to express my deepest remorse. I am ashamed and humiliated for my actions. The fact that I am guilty of using poor judgment, and thereby breaking the law, torments me with enormous grief and shame.

I am deeply remorseful for how my bad decisions have caused pain, and dishonored the ones I love, including my business partner, employees and colleagues. I have looked deep inside myself and at my life to understand what underlies my baffling behavior. I am incredibly humiliated and determined to ensure that under no circumstances will I commit another crime for as long as I live.

I will not make any excuses for the criminally bad decisions that resulted in me standing before you as a defendant. I hope this narrative will assist in providing a complete picture of my life. I have come to understand how depression and anxiety put me in a state of continuous denial, dissociation, and rationalization for a shockingly long period of time. When I look back on that, I see a different person entirely.

My therapist has started to help me understand the complexity of my emotional issues. While others suffer from similar childhood experiences, for reasons I can't explain, these experiences affected me in a way that led to this long pattern of behavior. I apologize the for length of this letter, but hope it is helpful.

Family Background

I was born in Covina, California in 1969. My parents were married when they were 19 years old and had me shortly after that time. As an infant and toddler, I had asthma, which caused my parents to spend a lot of time with me at the emergency room for breathing treatments, and several lengthy hospitals stays. My doctor advised my parents



to leave Southern California so I could have a normal life, and that if they stayed in the smog-filled city, I would spend much of my life in an oxygen tent. When I was five, my parents packed up everything they owned and moved to Finley, Washington.

Finley was a small, rural town. My parents divorced not long after we moved to Washington. I do not have any memory of my parents being married. After the divorce, my mom went to work at a local bar as the night manager and my grandmother watched my brother and me when my mom worked, or we had a babysitter. I do not have many memories of seeing my father except on Christmas at my grandparents' house or an occasional Sunday visit.

When I was first grade, my mom remarried. When I was in fifth grade, I came home from school one day to find my pony had been sold, and our house packed up. We left that afternoon without any warning. I was heartbroken that I did not have the chance to say goodbye to my family, friends or my pony.

I spent the second half of fifth grade living in Seattle. My mom told me we moved this time because my stepfather's construction company went out of business, and he had a new job at Boeing as a contract worker. I was able to finish the school year in Seattle, then my stepfather moved the family to St. Louis.

At that time, in the sixth grade, I went to Kennewick, Washington to live with my father, who I hardly knew. My father was still absent both physically and emotionally—he was a binge-drinking alcoholic and often left my brother and me alone. His personal life involved a litany of women—when I became close to one, she would disappear.

During this time, I did not see the only family I had known. My mom would write letters and we would have an occasional phone call. It wasn't until the summer after my sixth grade year that my mom told me she had thyroid cancer and it had spread. Without telling me, my mom and stepdad had left St. Louis, went back to southern California, and were living with my mom's parents. My mom had her thyroid and glands removed, and underwent cancer treatment. I was shocked to find out my family had kept this secret from me.

I moved to the St. Louis area and I started seventh grade at Hazelwood Junior High and later graduated from Hazelwood Central. During my high school years, my stepfather's alcohol abuse became apparent. Often times I would pray my mother would leave my stepdad, and I began to hate him. My mom did not have a college degree, and with four kids to support, she was unable to leave. I stayed at my best friend's house as much as I could. My stepfather's drinking became worse with each year, and the turmoil in my family did too. I no longer liked my stepfather, and I could not wait to go away to college.

Education and Career

I obtained student loans to pay for my college tuition and living expenses. I graduated from Southeast Missouri State with a Bachelor of Science with an emphasis in

Accounting. After college I worked at Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, where I met my future husband. We purchased a house together and then got married in November of 1995.

I found it difficult to work and live with my husband. I had the opportunity to interview for a business manager position with The Standing Partnership, a public relations agency. I was offered the job and began my career in public relations. I worked for the agency for seven years. Denise and I worked together, and we became close friends. Denise and I eventually left the agency together and founded Common Ground Public Relations in 2003.

I had always wanted to start my own company. CGPR began to grow. Instead of paying ourselves the salary we were accustomed to earning, we hired our first employee after being in business for six months. At the one-year mark we hired our second employee. We continued to grow and hired a new employee every six months. The goal was to have a ten-person firm and \$1 million in revenues. Denise and I did not pay ourselves much the first several years of the company.

While I was networking and assisting in CGPR's new business efforts, I used CGPR's credit cards for client entertainment. During this time, my household expenses had grown with the birth of my son in 1998 and my daughter in 2001. My previous salary was substantial, and I had saved money to go without a paycheck for a few months. Eventually I had to use my personal credit cards to pay for bills, as I could not continue to support my expenses without the salary I had at The Standing Partnership. I cashed in my 401(k) from Southwestern Bell, as well as my life whole life insurance policy to continue paying my household bills. I eventually ran out of my savings, and my credit cards were maxed out. I cashed out any and all items I could, and felt an overwhelming responsibility to keep my family afloat.

I started drinking to excess. I became depressed about the state of my finances and concerned for CGPR as well as Denise. I had made a mess out of my life and was using alcohol to escape from dealing with my eroding marriage and feeling like CGPR was failing. During the day I looked like a successful businesswoman that had her life together, but in reality, I was surviving each day with the help of alcohol and Xanax.

In 2008, CGPR had four clients call and resign in one month. This put me in a tailspin and my anxiety reached a new level. I was greatly concerned about the financial health of CGPR and if Dense and I would have to cut our salaries. I was paralyzed with fear.

Around this time I started "borrowing" from the company with the full intent of reimbursement, but the situation snowballed. I was in denial and rationalized the behavior. In my mind, the company was like my third child and it did not feel like dishonesty at first. After a period of time, I took steps to cover up the damage, to my everlasting shame. I loved my company and considered Denise my best friend and my sister. I would have done anything for her and her children and I regret the pain I caused her with my actions.

Domestic Issues

I was married to Brian Hoffman on November 5, 1994. We fought a lot from the very beginning but always loved each other. In 2006, due to marital issues, I moved into an apartment. I would come home before the kids woke up and wouldn't go to the apartment until they were asleep. I rented my apartment for six months. I couldn't imagine not seeing my children every day and tucking them into bed every night.

Brian did not like how much I began to drink after starting CGPR. I didn't believe I had a problem with alcohol then, however I do realize now I did, and still do. I believed he was mad at me for starting my company, and leaving such a high paying job. Since starting counseling, I have come to realize I did not take his feelings into consideration nor did I discuss with him the details of when I was resigning from The Standing Partnership.

In another act of denial and rationalization, I did not tell my husband how bad our finances were, and how much credit card debt we had, nor did I tell him I was using CGPR monies to help pay our bills. My marriage came to an end in 2018.

The Crime

The debt I incurred and the financial strain I put on my family and myself to start CGPR along with abusing alcohol led me to make the worse mistakes of my life. I lost my way, my integrity and violated the trust of Denise and CGPR employees.

When I reviewed the amount of money reported by the audit, I was shocked at the amount. It makes me physically sick to think about my actions. Over the years, my thoughts were to keep CGPR afloat, pay the firm's bills, pay the employees, pay Denise and myself to keep my household afloat. I was so wrong. I had always intended on repaying CGPR. Despite what my actions portray, I loved CGPR and never wanted to do anything to hurt the firm. I loved my company and the work I did.

In retrospect, I understand the absurdity of my thought process and actions. I also understand that my actions were not only horrific, but also criminal. I am humiliated to acknowledge that I committed a crime.

My Plan

Since my guilty plea, I have been looking for new employment in the marketing field. I have also been in counseling and reading the Bible on a daily basis. My parents are devoted Christians, and living with in their home and praying daily with them, along with therapy, has helped me understand my actions. My stepfather is a recovering alcoholic and has been sober for several decades. My parent's guidance and unconditional love has been a great support for me. I would not have been able to get through this period in my life without them. They will support me with a place to live that will allow me to devote the bulk of my earnings to paying restitution.

I am deeply remorseful for the crime that I committed. Since I started therapy, I have started to see the pattern of my destructive behavior. I am so sorry, and vow not to ever repeat my mistakes again.

Respectfully,

Lynese Cargill